

Committee: Cabinet

Agenda Item

Date: 15 January 2015

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Title: Conservation Area Appraisal, Audley End

Portfolio Holder: Cllr S Barker

Key decision: **No**

Summary

1. This report has been prepared and discussed with Saffron Walden Town Council who supports its general content. Littlebury Parish Council were also provided with information and were given a chance to comment.

The draft Conservation Area Appraisal for Audley End was made available on the Council's website and as printed copies. A public exhibition on 11 November 2014 was attended by the fieldworker who presented the findings and answered questions. This report summarises and comments on the representations made at the exhibition and subsequent to it in the consultation period which lasted from 31 October to 12 December 2014.

2. Saffron Walden Town Council welcomed the Conservation Area Appraisal in principle and considered it a worthwhile document which is likely to strengthen the control of development. This comment is valuable and is one shared by officers. The experience of the Conservation Area Appraisals so far undertaken indicates that the process is both important and popular with the local communities.

Recommendations

3. That the Conservation Area Appraisal be approved and used to assist in the process of determining planning applications and for implementing management proposals.
4. That the Audley End Conservation Area boundary be formally amended.

Financial Implications

5. The recommendation would require the advertising of the boundary changes which would cost in the region of £500 - 600. This can be met from existing budgets for Conservation.

Background Papers

6. The notes of the public exhibition held on 11 November 2014 and all representations received.

Impact

- 7.

Communication/Consultation	Full consultation undertaken.
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Community Safety	Not affected.
Equalities	Not affected.
Finance	Advertising costs can be met from existing budgets. The document will be disseminated through the website.
Health and Safety	Not affected.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	Not affected.
Sustainability	The report focuses on environmental issues seeking to preserve the environment of the respective communities, including their buildings and open spaces.
Ward-specific impacts	Saffron Walden Audley and Littlebury - various proposals as amended and as contained in report.
Workforce/Workplace	Existing staff resources.

Situation

8. The Audley End Conservation Area was first designated in in 1968 and revised in 1977. The Council has a duty within section 69 of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Area Act 1990 to consider the designation of Conservation Areas and to undertake periodic reviews. As part of this work the Council has undertaken a number of Conservation Area Appraisals of existing Conservation Areas.
9. This report sets out the key issues within the attached Conservation Area Appraisal and records the results of the consultation exercise and the changes proposed.
10. The principal issues and recommendations set out in the document are:

Two amendments to the boundary of the Conservation Area are suggested:

1. A small amendment to the boundary to the east of Audley End village former Post Office to exclude the area of open woodland and grass verge.
2. To extend the boundary to include the whole of the area currently designated as the Audley End Scheduled Monument.

Note: As a result of the consultation a number of points were raised by respondents relating to issues raised in the Appraisal report. These representations are included in the table below with appropriate officer comment.

General notes:

Planning Controls and Good Practice in Respect of Other Buildings that Make an Important Architectural or Historic Contribution.

Three such unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area have been identified. The Council will seek to ensure that these are retained. These are as follows: The head gardener's cottage, the 'new coach house' and the range of agricultural buildings and stabling to the immediate north of the stable block.

Proposed Article 4 Directions.

In the case of Audley End no such Directions are proposed because all historic buildings or structures are either listed or lie within the curtilage of Listed Buildings and are thus already afforded adequate protection.

Planning Controls and Good Practice in Respect of Other Distinctive Features that Make an Important Architectural or Historic Contribution.

This Appraisal has identified several features including walls and the pump in Audley End Village that make a particular contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. Some walls are protected from demolition without prior consent by virtue of exceeding the specified heights relevant to Conservation Area or by Listed Building legislation. Any proposal involving their demolition is also unlikely to be approved. Additionally the various Second World War military installations comprising the pillbox on the west side of the River Cam, roadblocks on the Stable Bridge and another on the Fly Bridge and loopholes in the Bothy Garden wall should all be retained.

Planning Control and Good Practice, Important Open Spaces, Trees and Groups of Trees.

The open spaces as identified in the appraisal, these being principally the grounds of St Mark's College and the park to Audley End House. All represent landscape features that materially contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area that must be protected.

Only the most significant trees are shown very diagrammatically. Subject to certain exceptions all trees in a Conservation Area are afforded protection and a person wanting to carry out works has to notify the Council. Trees that have not been identified may still be considered suitable for protection by Tree Preservation Orders. Owners are advised to make regular inspections to check the health of trees in the interests of amenity and Health and Safety. The quality trees in the grounds of St Mark's College, behind Abbey House and Lion House provide a green backdrop to these properties. Those throughout the Audley End park add scale and interest as well as forming part of the important historic landscape. Additionally, hedges on the periphery, particularly to the south of the village serve as a transition into the open fieldscape beyond.

Enhancement Proposals to Deal with Detracting Elements.

The Appraisal identifies a number of detracting elements together with a proposed course of action. It is recognised that such improvements will frequently only be achieved with the co-operation of owners and other bodies as appropriate.

10. Consultation results

The comments received at the public exhibition and during the consultation period are set out in the table arranged in the subject order above. Those responses which noted minor inaccuracies in the text of the Draft Conservation Area Appraisal, such as the misspelling of building names or attributed dates are not included here.

Issue	Representations made	Officer comment
General	<p>The English Heritage Estates Surveyor notes that traffic management at Audley End House is a prime consideration and remedial measures will form part of future plans for the site.</p> <p>The English Heritage Historic Places Advisor welcomes up-to-date appraisals and management plans for all conservation areas.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
Character analysis of Audley End	<p>Natural England welcomes the references to open land and open spaces under paragraphs 2.10 and 2.11.</p> <p>Natural England further suggests that the Council should also look at the fragmentation of open spaces and the linking of them back to paths and other sites as a benefit to both sustainable transport and biodiversity.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
Changes to the Conservation Area Boundary	<p>The English Heritage Estates Surveyor considers that the inclusion of the walled garden within the Conservation Area is anomalous given the overall character, design and archaeology of the entire site. It is suggested that the boundary should be amended to follow that of the Scheduled Monument or of the Designated Park.</p> <p>The English Heritage Historic Places Advisor suggests that it would be appropriate to include the whole of the scheduled area within the expanded Conservation Area. An alternative suggestion is made to include the registered park and garden within the Conservation Area.</p>	<p>Officers have re-surveyed the site and have considered the proposed options.</p> <p>Extend the boundary to include the extent of the Registered Park: The wider area of the Registered Park taking in the golf course, areas of agricultural land and miniature railway is considered now too widely placed to constitute a coherent area. Key elements within the registered Park, such as the Ring Hill fort and listed monuments are already afforded their own protection and would not benefit from being included within a Conservation Area.</p>

	<p>Audley End Estate recommends that a small revision be made to the boundary to exclude a number of trees close to the former Post Office at Audley End Village.</p> <p>A local resident fully supports the inclusion of the orchard within the Conservation Area and considers that the use of this area as a car park would be totally unacceptable.</p>	<p>Extend the boundary to include the extent of the Scheduled Monument: Officers agree that the relationship between the quality open space, built structures and archaeological features within the Scheduled Monument are of a significance to warrant inclusion within the Conservation Area. It is thus suggested that the Conservation Area be extended to include the full extent of the Scheduled Monument.</p> <p>Officers have examined the site and agree that the area proposed for exclusion does not represent a significant landscape feature. Furthermore, the revised boundary will more closely follow a demarked boundary on the ground.</p> <p>Noted</p>
Transport	<p>Audley End Estate raises concerns about the impact of the planned Wenden Road cycle path scheme on the bus route to Audley End Station.</p> <p>A local resident raises concerns about the impact of increased traffic in the vicinity of the Conservation Area and particularly over the listed Adam Bridge should the Wenden Road cycle path scheme be implemented.</p>	<p>The cycle path proposal has been subject of detailed public consultation and this has informed its development.</p>

11. Conclusion

The public consultation raised a number of useful points which have been incorporated into the Conservation Area Appraisal. The document should be amended to incorporate the above comments and use of the document should commence immediately to assist in the determination of planning applications and for implementing the management proposals as set out.

Formal changes to the Conservation Area Boundary will need to be advertised prior to them coming into force. It is necessary to inform the Secretary of State and English Heritage and

place an advert in the London Gazette and local newspapers. The owners of affected properties will also be notified of the changes.

12. Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Revisions to the Conservation Area	1 There is some risk that revisions will be approved which cannot be justified by the guidelines provided by English Heritage.	2 If revisions to the Conservation Area are approved which the Council cannot justify through good practice guidelines, the report and its recommendations will be unsound. Planning officers and applicants will then be without any up to date guidance and applications will be determined against out of date resources.	The report has been carefully produced and amended where any inaccuracies were noted. Consultation has been carried out with English Heritage, Audley End Estate, Saffron Walden Town Council and Littlebury Parish Council and Audley End residents and advice sought from specialist officers and experts to support the findings.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.